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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2008

In Today's Papers

Erdogan: "A New Economic Package Is on the Way"
Milliyet, Sabah, Hurriyet, Posta, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak: Mainstreams Sabah and Milliyet report that PM Erdogan announced yesterday that the government was preparing a new economic package to reduce the impact of the global crisis on Turkey's real sector. On his way to India, PM Erdogan told journalists that the preparations were underway, but the details would be made public after he returned from India. The package aims helping the small and medium scale enterprises in getting credit and preventing the dismissal of workers. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that PM Erdogan called on commercial banks to take careful steps at a time of global financial crisis. Erdogan said "Some banks are calling their loans back. You cannot take such actions at such dire times. Everyone must shoulder part of the burden."

Iraq-Turkey-U.S. Set Up Coordination Board against PKK
Media outlets report the newly-formed Turkey-Iraq-U.S. trilateral committee released a declaration that called the PKK a "terror organization" that "threatens Iraq's security and Turkey's territorial integrity."

Iraqi State Minister for National Dialogue Ekrem al-Hakim, who is in Ankara to explain the SOFA agreement between Iraq and the U.S., has confirmed reports that Turkey was given guarantees regarding cross-border operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. Mainstream Sabah reports al-Hakim told the press after meeting PM Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ali Babacan that the security deal "aims at preventing terror." He added Kurdish groups had agreed to declare the PKK a terrorist organization, and that Iraqi Kurdish leaders' views were taken at all stages of talks with the Americans over SOFA. Islamist-oriented Zaman, however, reports al-Hakim said he "did not know the content of SOFA," and what the agreement says regarding Turkey's possible cross border military operations into Iraq after January 1. Al-Hakim stressed terror organizations would not be allowed to use Iraqi territories as a launch pad for attacks on neighboring countries.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Iraq Relationship after SOFA

Ferai Tinc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "With the U.S.-Iraq security agreement, the U.S. occupation of Iraq will come to an end and a new era will start in Turkey as well. Improving relations with Iraq, America's closest ally in the region and strategic partner, will be at the top of Turkey's agenda. During this process, it will be a mistake to address the issue with blinders by reducing the process down to opposition against Sincari's participation in the meetings or concern over whether Turkish jets will be allowed to bomb northern Iraq or not. According to the agreement, Iraq will be able to have strategic meetings with U.S. whenever there is an internal or outside threat. This means the U.S. will stay in Iraq even after the withdrawal and the Iraqi government will need U.S. support for a long time in order to resolve its economic problems. Whether this agreement will be approved by the Iraqi parliament or not, the fact is that a new era is starting in Iraq at a time when the violence has not ended and internal peace has not been established. Turkey must cooperate with Iraq in every field, including security, should be strengthened."

Erol Manisali in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "In 2011, the U.S. military occupation in Iraq will end but it will be replaced by 'civilian occupation.' The Barzani administration in the north and the civilian administration in Baghdad will be under the guidance of the U.S., Britain and Israel. Some among the Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish and Turkmen groups may ask for help from the West. However, Ankara, Baghdad and Kurdistan's reins will be held by Washington and the Pentagon. Under this model, attempts to separate southeastern Anatolia from Turkey will be intensified. The EU will add Kurdish genocide resolutions on to Armenian genocide resolutions. Is Turkey

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ready to face this reality?"

U.S. Rejects Erdogan's Mediation Offer

Media outlets report that the U.S. has rejected PM Erdogan's offer, first seen in last week's New York Times, to mediate between the U.S. and Iran. Liberal Radikal carries the headline, "U.S.: We Already Have Contacts with Iran," and reports, "U.S. State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack said there is already a P-5+1 mechanism in place in order to deal with Iran." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "The U.S. Responds to Erdogan's Offer," by saying, "Stay Out of Our Dealings with Iran." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "The U.S. Rejects Erdogan's Offer to Mediate." Mainstream Milliyet carries the headline, "A Frosty Response from the U.S. to Erdogan's Suggestion."

Paper: AKP Could be Go-Between in U.S. Talks with Taliban
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports some in Washington believe negotiations could be held between Taliban leader Mullah Omar and former PM Gulbeddin Hikmetyar in the anticipated "process for settlement" in Afghanistan. Cumhuriyet reports that on November 5, The Washington Post said the U.S. and Afghan governments could sit at the negotiating table with Hikmetyar in an effort to reduce violence in the country. Turkey's ruling AKP's mediation in such talks is highly possible since Hikmetyar was given a warm welcome by Tayyip Erdogan, when he was with the Islamist Welfare Party (RP), during a visit to Istanbul in 1985. Former Afghan Interior Minister Ali Celali, a lecturer at the U.S. National Defense College, said he wouldn't be surprised to see Turkey involved in this process. Celali said all positive Turkish contributions would be "welcomed in Afghanistan."

A New Climate Between Turkey and Armenia

Liberal Radikal and Islamist-oriented Zaman report Armenia's National Security Council Secretary Artur Bagdasaryan underlined the importance of normalization of ties with Turkey. "We cannot remain enemies forever," said Bagdasaryan, adding "normal ties" with Turkey would help Armenia's economic development and infrastructure modernization. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan is expected to host his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbantyan in Istanbul on November 24. "We aim are aiming towards full normalization of ties with Armenia. We have a new climate for settlement. We need mutual forward steps, but the sides must hurry up," emphasized Babacan.

The Pirate Dilemma

Media outlets continue to feature sensational stories related to Somali piracy, including debates surrounding possible international military action against the pirates and concerns that piracy is already too much a part of Somali society, no matter how unstable of a country it is. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports in "A Pirate Confession," that U.S. Pentagon Spokesperson Geoff Morrell said, "There is no military solution - stability in Somalia will contribute to solving the problem of piracy," and the paper also noted, "Russia wants to join NATO and other forces that are making plans to use force against the pirates." Leftist Taraf says "The Pentagon is not hopeful that a solution can be found to the pirate problem." In "Russia Wants Land Operations against the Pirates," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Russia is prepared for joint military actions" against the pirates, but the Pentagon "responded to Russia's suggestion by saying, 'A military solution is not going to solve this problem.'" Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Yesterday in Cairo there was an emergency meeting among Arab countries regarding the threat of piracy in the Red Sea," and plans were discussed, "to establish an observation center in Cairo that could act as an early warning system to warn ships of approaching pirates."

Meanwhile, mainstream Sabah reports in "With the Spoils Comes A Luxurious Life," that "the town of Eyl benefits from the money the pirates make from ransom payments," and one pirate named Yusuf explained, "the first thing we do with our money is pay off debts,

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then we purchase imports, and then we invest our money in banks in Dubai, Nairobi, and Djibouti."

Editorial Commentary on AFRICOM

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman: The new U.S. strategy in Africa is AFRICOM. The U.S. and the EU are leading the countries investing in Africa, with other countries like China, Russia, Japan, and India just behind them. China, in particular, has made a series of investments in Africa over the last ten years. U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Eric Edelman recently warned the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that China was beginning to pose a threat to U.S. interests in Africa. While the U.S. military established AFRICOM in order to 'provide security, promote peace, and encourage development,' the Chinese have been using their 'soft power' through economic investments in Africa. However, it appears AFRICOM seeks to secure sources of oil in the region and fight against terror. For example, the U.S. last year increased its oil imports from the Gulf of Guinea by 20%. In the last seven years the U.S. has used its power in order to fight terrorism, but in the case of Africa, they are focusing on diplomacy. Barack Obama is just the right person to carve a new strategy similar to this, but maybe the pirate situation is creating new opportunities in the region...

Editorial Commentary on Domestic Politics; Kurdish Problem; Erdogan Visits India

Mustafa Unal in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Many circles see Deniz Baykal allowing women in veils into the CHP as a political maneuver on the eve of the forthcoming municipal elections. Why should it be disturbing if a party surrenders its rigid ideological stance and begins reaching out to the women who wear headscarves and veils? The CHP's acceptance of the headscarf is a small step for Turkey, but a huge step for the CHP. You can see this clearly from the uneasiness of the ideologues in the CHP. Baykal should continue to move forward and not backpedal."

Cengiz Candar wrote in liberal Radikal: In order for Turkey to tackle the Kurdish problem, it is important for KRG President Massoud Barzani to be positive, but more importantly, the Kurds themselves need to be willing to seek a solution.

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "PM Erdogan's visit to India is important because this is the first visit by a Turkish PM to India since 2000. A large number of businessmen accompanied PM Erdogan to India. The two countries are willing to realize new projects in the fields of energy, technology, and trade. This visit is important from the political angle as well. This is a new

approach that falls within the framework of a multi-dimensional foreign policy. India plays an increasingly effective role in world politics and the global economy. Also, India will be an important partner for Turkey in its efforts to diversify its foreign relations."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Gendarme private Fevzi Gungor, who was killed in a clash with PKK militants in Diyarbakir, was laid to rest yesterday in his hometown Bitlis. It was reported that Fevzi's brother Ferdi joined the PKK last year.

- Ahmet Ertak, the pro-Kurdish DTP mayor of Sirnak, was issued a 15-month prison sentence for 'making PKK propaganda' during an interview with the French television station France-24.

- On Friday, Turkey's state-owned TRT television will launch webpages in 30 different languages. Kurdish is not included among the languages in TRT's new web service.

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World

- Greek Cypriot President of the House of Representatives Marios Karoyian said "It is time for the international community to step up pressure on Turkey regarding the Cyprus issue."

- EU Commissioner Olli Rehn said Turkish workers might not be granted the right of free movement in Europe if Turkey becomes a member of the EU.

SILLIMAN